



EXECUTIVE COMPUTING

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Hear ye, hear ye, managers of PCs invited to unite

What the world needs now — among other things — is an association for managers of personal computers; an organization that sticks up for the needs of everyone who has struggled to become proficient on their PC, only to become the “de facto expert” for the rest of the company.

Not that you *mind* when everyone comes to you for help. In fact, it's rather flattering. But it can be overwhelming too — and can require putting in extra hours to make up for the time you spent helping others.

Being in such a position often necessitates special skills — like doing a backup without copying your old file over your new file; utmost tact — like trying to explain to your boss why it happened in the first place; and knowledge — like reading the manual, if all else fails.

Doctors have associations, lawyers have associations, policemen have associations — even dog catchers have associations.

Accordingly, not to be outdone by the dog catchers, I herewith propose, promote and encourage the formation of the **PCMA** — the **Personal Computer Managers Association**.

Important functions

Lest you think I jest, here are some important functions for the PCMA:

✓ Help members keep track of the new hardware and software most useful for particular business situations. Since there are hundreds of different computers and peripherals, and thousands of software packages, it's easy to spend too much time evaluating products. The PCMA would survey its members to find out which products are being used, and the results would benefit everyone.

✓ Help members locate the products or expert advice they need. Often, computer stores or consultants will try to help you with your problem, even though it's not their area of specialty. You end up the loser since you pay for their time and probably don't get the kind of expert advice you originally were seeking. An

association-sponsored list of local specialists would be helpful for PC managers and specialists alike.

✓ Help members find the best deals on equipment, software, supplies and maintenance. The PCMA could keep track of used computer prices and new equipment sales that might interest its members. It could even facilitate bulk purchase arrangements for supplies, or discounts for its members at local stores.

✓ And finally, provide members with a means to speak directly with PC managers from other organizations. This outside contact could be invaluable, especially in smaller firms where just one person may be the PC expert. It would provide a forum for technical questions and answers that may not be otherwise available.

Many DP-related groups

Actually, there's no shortage of data processing-related associations and user-groups today.

Nationally, there are two organizations with tens of thousands of members. One is the Association for Computing Machinery, which is comprised mostly of college professors, students and programmers. The other is the Association of Data Processing Managers, which is for professionals in the data processing field. On a smaller scale is the Association of Computer Users (which I founded in 1974), which includes data processing consultants and large system users.

The Gale Directory of Associations — available in libraries — lists these and many other groups, along with their addresses and a brief description.

Also, practically every major city in the country has a PC users group, sometimes affiliated with a local university. The level of the discussions is frequently too technical for business users. But many of these groups have regular meetings with opportunities to meet other users.

How would the PCMA function differently from these groups? I propose the main focus be the needs of *non-data processing professionals* — everyone from managers and company presidents to secretaries and engineers — people who may be experts in other fields but who use personal computers for business purposes. These would be "regular" members. A separate membership category called "sponsors" would be set up for consultants, data processing sales representatives and suppliers.

Become a charter member

Now for the pitch. If the idea of joining the PCMA interests you, write to me at the address below. Enthusiastic response will determine whether we proceed to form a local chapter. And, since the value of member surveys depends on how many join, a large number is needed to provide a good statistical sample. Survey results will be reported in this column at a later date.

And, just to show that the PCMA *will not be all business*, we'll have a kick-off pool party for charter members. So don't delay; drop me a note today.

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